September 4, 1984

Dear Professor Rosand,

Attached are a title page, contents page, and a Preface for my dissertation. I have asked for and been granted a leave of absence from Widener University for the academic year 1984 - 1985. It is my intention to devote the next nine months solely to the writing and defense of my dissertation.

What do you think of the topic, the proposed chapters, and the preface ?

Can you advise me about what I have to do about finishing up all the requirements for the degree. I have completed all the course work, and passed three language exams. Must I do a weeks research paper ? Do I have to reapply for admission since I have been away for so long ? If I want to defend in the Spring of 1985 must I register that semester ?

Thank you for your help, and congratulations on your new position.

Sincerely,

Donald Powell

Donald W. Powell
322 E. 19th Street, apt. 2
Chester, PA 19013

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STYLE IN AMERICAN NINETEENTH-CENTURY STUDIO PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY

Donald Walter Powell

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

in the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

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2 The nature of style in American nineteenth-century photographic portraiture : a diversity of levels of quality and sophistication

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Preface

A new genre of portraiture with a unique pictorial aesthetic.

The nineteenth-century American studio portrait photograph is an ideal image, showing the sitter in his best possible light. In this way it differs little from the portrait in the long tradition of Western European portraiture. Two aspects of this new and characteristically nineteenth-century genre of portraiture, however, distinguish it from the tradition of portraiture which preceeded it. The first is the means used to achieve the end. Nineteenth-century American studio portrait photography is a genre of photography in which the camera, a machine, and a sequence of related technological/mechanical/chemical processes and manipulations is combined with other manipulations done by the portrait photographer and the sitter to produce the portrait. The second way in which nineteenth-century American camera-portraiture differs from all portraiture which preceeded it is in the nature of the participation of the sitter in the portrait making process. Since the camera as a machine takes a literal image of what is placed before it, camera-portraiture allows for, in fact requires, the active participation of the sitter in the portrait making process. No longer is the dynamic of the portrait taking process one in which the artist alone is active, and the sitter is passive. Instead, in camera portraiture, not only does the sitter actively prepare for the moment which the camera will record by adjusting the physical fact of his outer appearance, but even more importantly, at the actual moment of the taking of the image the sitter must rise up and put his best face forward. The sitter thus takes an active part in the shaping of the moment. Camera portraiture, therefore, must be thought of as a collaboration between the portrait photographer and the sitter.